

COL(P) LOUIS J. ANTONETTI

The Deputy Adjutant General, Joint Staff Division, speaks candidly of his division's plans and objectives, and the importance of being ready for change.

If you've ever wondered what a 53-year-old dynamo in an Army uniform looks like, look no further. Colonel (P) Lou Antonetti is your man. This energetic leader has served in a number of important, high-profile state and federal positions during his 33-year career as a California Army National Guardsman. His well-rounded career, his leadership abilities, and his knack of getting things done quickly and professionally led to his appointment in 2000 as the Chief of Staff of the California National Guard. He served in that position for one year before being selected to attend the prestigious National War College in Washington, D.C. After graduating with honors and earning a master's degree in National Security Strategy in the process, he returned to the California National Guard Headquarters in 2002 to become only the second Deputy Adjutant General of the Joint Staff Division.

His new position places Colonel (P) Antonetti at the helm of many of the California National Guard's most important programs, including Counterdrug, Homeland Security, and Plans and Operations. The National Guard Bureau is currently spearheading efforts to convert all State Area Command Headquarters to Joint Staffs. If such plans come to fruition, this soon-to-be general could well be at the "tip of the spear."

Major Stan Zezotarski began his interview with Colonel (P) Antonetti by getting down to basics.

GRIZZLY: What exactly is the joint division?

ANTONETTI: Major General Monroe, our Adjutant General, was very astute in deciding, soon after his appointment, to establish a Joint Staff Division within the California National Guard. The Joint Staff Division touches virtually every unit in the

California Army and Air National Guard.

GRIZZLY: In what way?

ANTONETTI: The joint staff division has 15 different directorates and a couple of different branches. It includes the United States Property and Fiscal Office (USPFO), Counterdrug, several Youth Programs, Administration, Operation Ready Families, Information Management, and Plans and Operations, to name a few. Basically, it functions as the staff element that provides the support to operate Fort California.

GRIZZLY: Am I correct in assuming that the Joint Staff Division replaces the STARC?

ANTONETTI: Lieutenant General H. Steven Blum, the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, wants to do away with the term "STARC"—State Area Command—and replace it with the term "Joint Headquarters." By October 1, 2003, all state National Guards will establish a joint headquarters.



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PHOTOS BY SFC ROBERT PACK

GRIZZLY: Are there plans to establish a Joint STARC Table of Distribution Allowances?

ANTONETTI: There is a plan to establish a Joint STARC TDA for the M-Day. Our plan was to begin early implementation starting July 1, 2003 to establish the Joint Staff Division as a drilling organization. The effective date of the Joint Staff TDA is December 1, 2003.

GRIZZLY: As the new Director for Joint Division, What is your mission Statement?

ANTONETTI: In short, it is to support the goals and objectives of the California National Guard—specifically the Army and Air National Guard units.

GRIZZLY: And your vision statement?

ANTONETTI: The cooperative vision – Major General Monroe’s focus – is that we create a premier military force supported by qualified, disciplined, dedicated soldiers and airmen and civilians working as a team, and structured and resourced to accomplish its mission.

GRIZZLY: I couldn’t help notice the vision poster on your office wall.

ANTONETTI: Yes. The caption reads: “A leader’s job is to look into the future and to see the organization not as it is but as it can become.” I hung that in my office as a reminder of our job as leaders.

GRIZZLY: What are your objectives?

ANTONETTI: We have five. First, we must have an effective recruiting and retention program. Commands must place a priority on retaining its current members while it’s engaged in active recruiting. A vital component is to remember that we recruit soldiers and airmen, but we retain families. If we are not focused on the family at the same time that we are recruiting the soldier, we are missing a very important part of the individual.

GRIZZLY: And your second objective?

ANTONETTI: Our second objective is administrative excellence. Once we have the soldiers and airmen, the civilians assigned to the full-time workforce, and the traditional Guardsmen, we have to take care of the administrative needs. Commands must pay attention to the little things that make a unit fit to fight. By taking care of the details of personnel administration – to include the pay, promotions, efficiency reports, awards, and family care programs, its members will be ready to go.

Our third objective is achieving logistical excellence.

GRIZZLY: What exactly is logistical excellence?

ANTONETTI: By that I mean we need to ensure that we obtain all authorized property and

additional material necessary for a unit to accomplish its state and federally directed missions. It’s important to obtain the equipment and to store and maintain it properly, so that it is always ready.

Our fourth objective is to support training. We have to train to standards—across the board in the Army and Air National Guard, as well as Joint Staff Division. I expect the Joint Staff Division to support innovative training programs and to develop integrated training programs. That’s a key and significant role.

GRIZZLY: And your final objective?

ANTONETTI: To train the Joint Staff to take care of “yourself.” It’s extremely important that you take care of the business at hand, but you also have to ensure that you’re fit to fight and ready. Our leaders must remain technically and tactically proficient in their field, seek out training and education programs to keep them on the cutting edge of new technology development and military doctrine.

GRIZZLY: Major General Monroe recently

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announced that California’s Joint Division is the model for the other National Guards across the country and that it will receive funding. How is the Joint Staff Division funded now?

ANTONETTI: From my perspective, the California National Guard’s Joint Staff Division is a significant model for other National Guard organizations. It is probably one of the first, if not the first, established Joint Staff Division. Both the Army and Air Guard and state funds fund it. There is no purple money. The only purple funding we have is state funds that we can use for both Army and Air.

GRIZZLY: Please explain.

ANTONETTI: For example, on March 1, 2003, with the concurrence of General Monroe, I established a new Directorate for Homeland Security within the Joint Staff Division. Its mission is to work on the California National Guard’s strategic and operational requirements necessary to support our state and nation in the global War on Terrorism. The Directorate of Homeland Security has submitted requests for federal grants as a state agency—which the State Military

Department is—that we are tracking.

GRIZZLY: How does having a joint division improve the California National Guard’s response to state emergencies?

ANTONETTI: General Monroe established within the Joint Staff a Joint Task Force for domestic support to provide a command and control relationship between the Army and Air National Guard units called up for civil emergencies in California. With a strong Directorate of Plans and Operations for military support within the Joint Staff Division, we enhanced our relationship with state and local governments and organizations in the emergency response business.

GRIZZLY: For joint exercises?

ANTONETTI: Exactly. The Joint Staff Division is aggressively planning exercises with state and local jurisdictions to react to both national and man-made disasters and even acts or potential acts of terrorism.

GRIZZLY: This is where your Weapons of Mass Destruction Civil Support Teams come into play.

ANTONETTI: That’s right. We have two certified Weapons of Mass Destruction Civil Support Teams, each with a 22-person full-time force, assigned to advise and provide support to local jurisdictions, in the event of a threat or an actual Weapons of Mass Destruction incident.

GRIZZLY: That’s impressive. What other functions do you have planned for this task force?

ANTONETTI: We are developing a rapid response force to respond to large-scale emergencies on very short notice. Our goal is to have a 500-plus force of Army and Air Guardsmen that are organized, trained, and equipped to immediately respond when called upon. Our Civil Support Teams will be at the very tip of the rapid response force’s spear.

GRIZZLY: What lies ahead for the Joint Staff Division?

ANTONETTI: Simply put: change. I truly feel that the National Guard and the Joint Staff have to be ready for change.

GRIZZLY: Can you think of any foreseeable changes?

ANTONETTI: In the near term, solidifying the Joint Staff and its relationship with the Air and Army components. That change is going to require a cultural shift, as well as an organizational change. We cannot be afraid of change. We just have to be very thoughtful and smart about how we implement it.

GRIZZLY: Thank you, Colonel, for taking the time for this interview. 🐾